

Ninth American Edition.

THE
STAR IN THE EAST;
A
SERMON,

PREACHED IN THE PARISH CHURCH OF ST. JAMES, BRISTOL, ON
SUNDAY, FEB. 26, 1809.

FOR THE BENEFIT OF THE

“ Society for Missions to Africa and the East.”

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FROM INDIA.

For we have seen his Star in the East, and are come to worship him. *Matt. ii. 2.*

TO WHICH IS ADDED,

AN APPENDIX,

CONTAINING THE

Interesting Report of the Rev. Dr. Kerr, to the Governor of Madras, on the State of the ancient Christians in Cochin and Travancore; and an Account of the Discoveries, made by the Rev. Dr. Buchanan, of 200,000 Christians, in the sequestered region of Hindostan.

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A SERMON.

MATTHEW ii. 2.

"For we have seen his Star in the East, and are come to worship him."

WHEN, in the fulness of time, the Son of God came down from heaven to take our nature upon him, many circumstances concurred to celebrate the event, and to render it an illustrious epoch in the history of the world. It pleased the Divine Wisdom that the manifestation of the Deity should be distinguished by a suitable glory: and this was done by the ministry of Angels, by the ministry of Men, and by the ministry of Nature herself.

First, This was done by the ministry of *Angels*; for an Angel announced to the shepherds "the glad tidings of great joy which should be to all people;" and a "multitude of the heavenly host sang Glory to God in the Highest, on earth peace, good will to ward men."

Secondly, It was done by the ministry of *Men*; for illustrious persons, divinely directed, came from a far country, to offer gifts, and to do honour to the newborn King.

Thirdly, It was done by the ministry of *Nature*. Nature herself was commanded to bear witness to the presence of the God of Nature. A Star or Divine Light, pointed out significantly from heaven the spot upon earth where the Saviour was born.

Thus, I say, it pleased the Divine Wisdom, by an assemblage of heavenly testimonies, to glorify the incarnation of the Son of God.

All these testimonies were appropriate; but the *Journey* of the *Eastern Sages* had in it a peculiar fitness. We can hardly imagine a more natural mode of honouring the event than this, that illustrious persons should proceed from a far country to visit the child which was born Saviour of the world. They came, as it were, in the name of the Gentiles, to acknowledge the heavenly gift, and to bear their testimony against that nation which rejected it. They came as the *representatives* of the whole heathen world; not only of the heathens in the East, but also of the heathens in the West, from whom *we* are descended. In the name of the whole world, lying "in darkness, and in the shadow of death," they came inquiring for that Light which, they had heard, was to visit them in the fulness of time. "And the Star which they saw in the East went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child was. And when they were come into the house, they fell down and worshipped him; and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto him gifts,

“gold, and frankincense, and myrrh;” and they departed into their own country.

Do you ask how the Star of Christ was understood in the East? Or why Providence ordained that peculiar mode of intimation?

Christ was foretold in old prophecy, under the name of the “*Star*” “that should arise out of Jacob;” and the rise of the Star in Jacob was notified to the world, by the appearance of an actual Star.

We learn from authentic Roman history, that there prevailed “in the East” a constant expectation of a Prince, who should arise out of Judea, and rule the world. That such an expectation did exist, has been confirmed by the ancient writings of India. Whence, then, arose this extraordinary expectation, for it was found also in the Sybilline books of Rome?

The Jewish expectation of the Messiah had pervaded the East long before the period of his appearance. The Jews are called by their own prophet the “Expecting people,”* (as it may be translated, and as some of the Jews of the East translate it), the “people looking for and expecting One to come.” Wherever, then, the ten tribes were carried throughout the East, they carried with them their *expectation*. And they carried also the prophecies on which their expectation was founded. Now one of the clearest of these prophecies runs in these words: “There shall come a *Star* out of Jacob.” And as in the whole dispensation concerning the Messiah, there is a wonderful fitness between the words of prophecy and the person spoken of, so it pleased the Divine Wisdom that the rise of the Star in Jacob should be announced to the world by the appearance of an actual Star, (for by what other means could the great event be more significantly communicated to the remote parts of the earth?) and this actual Star, in itself a proper emblem of that “Light which was to lighten the Gentiles,” conducted them to Him who was called in a figure the Star of Jacob, and the “glory of his people Israel;” and who hath said of himself, (Rev. xxii. 16.) “I, Jesus, am the bright and morning Star.”†

But again, why was the East thus honoured? Why was the East, and not the West, the scene of these transactions? The East was the scene of the first revelation of God. The fountains of inspiration were first opened in the East. And, after the flood, the first family of the new world was planted in the East; I mean the East, in relation to Judea. Besides, millions of the human race inhabit that portion of the globe. The chief population of the world is in these regions. And in the middle of *them* the Star of Christ first appeared. And, led by it, the wise men passed through many nations, tongues, and kindreds, before they arrived at Judea in the West; bearing tidings to the world that the Light was come, that the “Desire of all Nations” was come. Even to Jerusalem herself they brought the first intimation that her long expected Messiah was come.

* Is. xviii. 2. “The people meted out,” in our translation.

† The Jews used to speak of their Messiah under the appellation of *Bar Cocab*, or “the Son of the Star;” and false Christs actually assumed that name.

Now, my brethren, as the East was honoured in the first age, in thus pointing out the Messiah to the world; so now again, after a long interval of darkness, it is bearing witness to the truth of his religion; not indeed by the shining of a Star, but by affording luminous evidence of the divine origin of the Christian Faith. It affords evidence, not only of the general truth of its *history*, but of its peculiar *doctrines*; and not of its doctrines merely, but of the *divine power* of these doctrines in convincing the understandings and converting the hearts of men. And in this sense it is, that "we have seen his Star in the East, and are come to worship him."

And when these evidences shall have been laid before you, you will see that the Time is come for diffusing His religion throughout the world; you will "offer gifts" in His name for the promotion of the work; and you will offer up prayers in its behalf, "that God would be pleased to make his ways known, his saving health unto all nations."

In this discourse, we propose to lay before you,

1st. EVIDENCES of the *general truth* of the Christian Religion, existing in the East.

2dly. EVIDENCES of the *divine power* of that religion exemplified in the East.

I. The *general truth* of the Christian Religion is illustrated by certain evidences in the East. Of these we shall mention the following.

1. Ancient writings of India, containing particulars of the *history* of Christ.

2. Certain doctrines of the East, shadowing forth the peculiar doctrines of Christianity, and manifestly derived from a common origin.

3. The state of the *Jews* in the East, confirming the truth of ancient prophecy.

4. The state of the *Syrian Christians* in the East, subsisting for many ages a separate and distinct people in the midst of the heathen world.

These subjects, however, we must notice very briefly.

1. Hindoo history illustrates the *history* of the Gospel. There have lately been discovered in India, certain Shanscrit writings containing Testimonies of Christ. They relate to a Prince who reigned about the period of the Christian æra; and whose history, though mixed with fable, contains particulars which correspond, in a surprising manner, with the advent, birth, miracles, death, and resurrection of our Saviour. The event mentioned in the words of the Text is exactly recorded, namely, That certain holy men, directed by a Star, journeyed toward the West, where they beheld the incarnation of the Deity.*

These important records have been translated by a learned Orien-

* This testimony of the Hindoo writer accords with that of *Chalcidius*, the ancient commentator on Plato, who adds, "that the infant Majesty being found, the wise men worshipped, and gave gifts suitable to so great a God."

talist,* and he has deposited the originals among the archives of the Asiatic Society. From these, and from other documents, he has compiled a work, entitled "The History of the introduction of the Christian Religion into India; its progress and decline;" and at the conclusion of the work he thus expresses himself: "I have written this account of Christianity in India with the impartiality of an Historian; fully persuaded that our holy religion cannot receive any additional lustre from it."

Thus far of the *history* of the Gospel.

2. We are now to notice certain *doctrines* of the East, shadowing forth the doctrines of Christianity.

The peculiar doctrines of the Christian Religion are so strongly represented in certain systems of the East, that we cannot doubt the source whence they have been derived. We find in them the doctrines of the Trinity, of the incarnation of the Deity, of the Atonement for sin, and of the influence of the Divine Spirit.

First, The doctrine of the *Trinity*. The Hindoos believe in *one* God Brahma, the creator of all things: and yet they represent him as subsisting in *three* persons; and they worship one or other of these persons throughout every part of India. And what proves that they hold this doctrine distinctly, is, that their most ancient representation of the Deity is formed of one body and three faces. Nor are these representations confined to India alone; but they are to be found in other parts of the East.

Whence, then, my brethren, has been derived this idea of a *TRIUNE* God? If, as some allege, the doctrine of the Trinity among Christians be of recent origin, whence have the Hindoos derived it? When you shall have read all the volumes of Philosophy on the subject, you will not have obtained a satisfactory answer to this question.

Secondly, The doctrine of the *Incarnation* of the Deity. The Hindoos believe that one of the persons in their Trinity (and that, too, the second person), was "manifested in the flesh." Hence their fables of the incarnations of Vishnoo, of which you may have heard. And this doctrine of the incarnation of the Deity is found over almost the whole of Asia.

Whence, then, originated this idea, that "God should become man, and take our nature upon him?" The Hindoos do not consider that it was an Angel merely that became man, but God himself. The incarnation of God is a frequent theme of their discourse. We cannot doubt whence this peculiar tenet of religion has been derived. We must believe that all the fabulous incarnations of the Eastern Mythology are derived from the real incarnation of the Son of God, or from the prophecies which went before it.

Thirdly, The doctrine of *Atonement* for sin, by the shedding of blood. To this day in Hindostan, the people bring the Goat or Kid to the Temple; and the Priest sheds the blood of the innocent victim. Nor is this peculiar to Hindostan. Throughout the whole East, the doctrine of a sacrifice for sin seems to exist in one form or other.

* Mr. Wilford.

How is it then, that some of you in this country say there is no Atonement! For, ever since "Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain;" ever since Noah, the father of the new world, "offered burnt-offerings upon the altar," sacrifices have been offered up in almost every nation; as if for a constant memorial before the world, that "without shedding of blood, there is no remission of sin."

Fourthly, The doctrine of the influence of the *Spirit* of God. In the most ancient writings of the Hindoos, some of which have been lately published, it is asserted that the "divine spirit, or light of holy knowledge," influences the minds of men. And the man who is the subject of such influence is called the "man twice-born." Many chapters are devoted to the duties, character, and virtues of "the man twice-born."

If, then, in the very systems of the heathen world, this exalted idea should have a place, how much more might we expect to find it in the revelation of the true God!

We could illustrate other doctrines by similar analogies did time permit. If these analogies were merely partial or accidental, they would be less important. But they are not casual; as every man who is versed in the Holy Scriptures and in Oriental Mythology well knows. They are general and systematic. Was it ever alleged that the Light of Nature could teach such doctrines as these? They are all *contrary* to the Light of Nature.

These, my brethren, are doctrines which exist at this day, in the midst of the idolatry and moral corruption of the heathen world. Every where there appears to be a *counterfeit* of the *true* doctrine. The inhabitants have lost sight of the only true God, and they apply these doctrines to their false gods. For these doctrines are relics of the first Faith of the earth. They are, as you see, the strong characters of God's primary revelation to man, which neither the power of man, nor time itself, hath been able to destroy; but which have endured from age to age, like the works of nature, the moon and stars, which God hath created incorruptible.

3. Another circumstance, illustrating the truth of the Christian religion in the East, is the state of the *Jews*. The Jews are scattered over the whole face of the East, and the fulfilment of the *prophecies* concerning them is far more evident in these regions than it is here among Christian nations.

The last great punishment of the Jewish people was inflicted for their last great crime—their shedding the blood of the Son of God! And this instance of divine indignation has been exhibited to all nations, and all nations seem to have been employed by the ordinance of God in inflicting the punishment.

By express prophecy, the Jews were sentenced to become "the scorn and reproach of all people;" and "a proverb and by-word among all nations." Now, that their stubborn unbelief should be a reproach to them among Christian nations here in the West, is not so strange; that they should be a proverb and by-word among those who had heard the prophecy concerning them, is not so re-

markable. But to have seen them (as I have seen them) insulted and persecuted by the ignorant nations in the East; in the very words of prophecy, "trodden down of the heathen;" trodden down by a people who never heard the name of Christ; who never heard that the Jews had rejected Christ; and who, in fact, *punished the Jews, without knowing their crime*; this, I say, hath appeared to me an awful completion of the divine sentence.

4. Another monument of the Christian religion in the East, is the state of the *Syrian Christians*, subsisting for many ages a separate and distinct people, in the midst of the corruption and idolatry of the heathen world. They exist in the very midst of India, like the bush of Moses, burning and not consumed; surrounded by the enemies of their faith, and subject to their power, and yet not destroyed. There they exist, having the pure word of God in their hands, and speaking in their churches that same language which our Saviour himself spake in the streets of Jerusalem.

We may contemplate the history of this people, existing so long in that dark region, as a type of the *inextinguishable Light* of Christ's religion; and in this sense it may be truly said, "We have seen his "Star in the East."

The probable design of the Divine Providence, in preserving this people, appears to be this: That they should be a *seed* of the Church in Asia: that they should be a special instrument for the conversion of the surrounding heathen, when God's appointed time is come; a people prepared for his service, as fellow labourers with us; a people, in short, in the midst of Asia, to whom we can point as an evidence to the rest, of the truth and antiquity of the Christian Faith.

And this shall suffice as to the testimonies of the general truth of Christianity existing in the East.

II. We proposed, in the second branch of the discourse, to lay before you some evidences of the *divine power* of the Christian Religion exemplified in the East.

To say that Christianity has been propagated in the East, *as* other religions have been propagated, is to say nothing. It is little to say that thousands have adopted the *name*, and that it pervades populous provinces. For three centuries past, the Romish Church has diffused the *name* of Christianity throughout the East; and this success demonstrates how practicable it is to "propagate our religion," (in the common sense of that expression) throughout all nations of the world. Providence seems to have ordained this previous labour of the Romish Church, to facilitate the preaching of the true gospel at the appointed time; for Christianity is found, even in its worst form, to possess a moral and civilizing efficiency.

But it is in the East, as it is in the West—all are not Christians who are called Christians. "He is not a Christian, who is one outwardly; neither is that baptism which is outward in the flesh." The fact was, the Romish Church preached Christianity in the East, *without the Bible*.

Let us now inquire, what has been the consequence of sending the Bible to the East. It is nearly one hundred years since the Bible

was sent to the Hindoos; but not by our country. This honour was given to the Protestant churches of Denmark and Germany. It was sent to a certain nation in the South of India; for there are many nations in Hindostan. What then was the effect of giving them the Bible? It was the same as that which followed the giving the Bible to us, while we lay in almost Hindoo darkness, buried in the ignorance and superstition of the church of Rome. It gave light and knowledge; God blessed his own word to the conversion of the heart, and men began to worship him in sincerity and truth.

That province in India, which was blessed with the Bible, hath "since seen a great Light." During nearly the whole of the last century, multitudes of Hindoos (both heathens and Roman Catholics) became members of the Protestant Church, one generation after another; and amongst them there has ever been found, according to the records of the Mission,* such a proportion of serious piety, as you might expect to find, when the Gospel is preached with faithfulness and zeal.

During the whole of the last century, Providence favoured them with a succession of holy and learned men, educated at the Universities of Germany: among whom was the venerable SWARTZ, called the Apostle of the East; and others not much inferior to him, men whose names are scarcely known in this country, but who are as famous among the Hindoos, as Wickliffe and Luther are amongst us. The ministry of these good men was blessed in many provinces in the South of India, and the bounds of their churches are extending unto this day. The language of the country is called the *Tamul*; and the first translation of the Bible, in that language, was made, as we said, about a hundred years ago. Like Wickliffe's Bible with us, it became the father of many versions, and, after a succession of improved editions, it is now considered by the Brahmins themselves (like Luther's Bible in German) as the classical standard of the *Tamul* tongue.

A Jubilee has lately been celebrated in India, in honour of the Gospel. In the month of July, 1806, a Jubilee was observed by these Hindoo churches, in commemoration of the arrival of the two first Protestant Missionaries on the 9th of July, 1706. The year 1806 being the *hundredth* year (or the second fiftieth) since the Gospel first visited their land, was to them "the year of Jubilee." The happy occasion had been long anticipated, and was marked with demonstrations of joy and gladness. The people, as we are informed, walked in procession to their churches, carrying palms in their hands, and singing the 98th Psalm; and, after offering up praises and thanksgivings to the Most High, they heard a sermon suitable to the day. The sermon at the Jubilee of Trichinopoly was preached by their aged Minister, the Rev. Mr. Pohle, from these words: "Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations; baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost."†

* These Records are published in upwards of 30 volumes, thick 4to.

† See Accounts of the "Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge," just published.

These were the effects of sending the Bible to the East. Men were "brought to a knowledge of the truth;" and at the end of a hundred years, the natives kept the Jubilee of the *Bible*.

Such, my brethren, was the Light in the South of India. And now a Light hath sprung up in the North of which you have heard. Our own country hath begun, though late, to dispense "the word of Life." And although the time has been short, the success has been great. In the North, in the West, and in Ceylon, translations of the Scriptures are going on in almost all the languages of Oriental India.

Our own country hath at length assumed an interest in diffusing the Gospel. "In the fulness of time," we trust her different societies have come forth, as with one consent, to begin the work of evangelizing the East. "In the fulness of time," we trust, hath this country begun, by these instruments, to employ her great power, and her enlightened zeal, in extending the knowledge of the true God throughout the world.

We ought not to regret that the work is carried on by Christians of different denominations; for if they teach the religion of the Bible, their labour will be blessed. We have no contentions in India, like those in Britain, between Protestants of different names. There they are all friends. The strife there is between light and darkness; between the true God and an idol. So liberal and catholic is the Christian in Asia (while he looks over the map of the World, and can scarcely find where the isle of Britain lies) that he considers even the term "Protestant," as being in a certain degree exclusive or sectarian. "The religion of the Bible," or, "the religion of Christ," is the name by which he would describe his creed. For when the idolator once abjures his own cast for the Gospel, he considers the differences of Protestants (if he ever hear of them) as being very insignificant. Indeed he cannot well understand them. In the great revolution that takes place in his mind (if his conversion be real) he cannot contemplate these minute objects. We ought not then, I say, to regret that different classes of Christians are employed in the work. For the case is an exact parallel of that recorded in the Gospel (Mark ix. 38): "And John answering said, Master, we saw one casting out Devils in thy name, and he followeth not *us*; and we forbad him, because he followeth not *us*. But Jesus said, FORBID HIM NOT."

On my arrival from India, a few months ago, I learned that a controversy had engaged the attention of the public, for some time, on the question of sending Missions to the East. In the future history of our country, it will scarcely be believed that in the present age an attempt should have been made to prevent the diffusion of the blessed principles of the Christian religion. It will not be believed that an attempt should have been made to prove by argument, that it was wrong to make known the Revelation of the true God to our fellow men; or if, in some instances it might be permitted (as in the case of *remote* nations) that we ought not to instruct *that* people who were affirmed to be the *most* superstitious, and *most* prejudiced; and who were *our own* subjects. We scarcely believe ourselves that, twenty years ago, an attempt was made to defend the traffic in *slaves*, and

that books were written to show that it was humane in its character, just in its principle, and honourable to our nation. The discussion, therefore, that has taken place on the civilization of the East, has been of important use. Men in general were not informed. The scene of action was remote, and the subject was new in almost all its relations. Even to some of those persons who had been in India, the subject was new. Just as in this country, if you were to ask certain persons whether they had any acquaintance with the *religious* world, they would say they had never heard there *was* such a world; so some from India hazarded an opinion concerning the "inveterate prejudices" of certain tribes in the East, who scarcely knew the geography of the country where they lived; what their religion was, or whether they had any religion at all. They had seen no Star in the East; they had heard of no jubilee for the Bible. Like the spies of Israel, who brought back "an evil report" from Canaan, they reported that India was no "land of promise" for the Gospel; that the land was *barren*, and that the men were *Anakims*. But the faithful Swartz gave another testimony. He affirmed that it is "exceeding good land;" and "his record is true." He who was best qualified to give an opinion on the subject, who preached among the Hindoos for nearly fifty years, founded churches among them in different provinces, established schools for their children, disseminated religious tracts in their own tongue, and intimately knew their language, manners, prejudices, and superstitions; he who restored the Christian character to respect, after it had fallen into contempt; who was selected by the natives as an arbiter of their differences with the English, and whom both Hindoos and English loved and feared in his life and honoured in his death;* this good man, I say, differed in opinion from some who have lately ventured to give a judgment in this matter: he affirmed that it was

* At the funeral of Mr. Swartz, the Hindoo Rajah of Tanjore came to do honour to his memory in the presence of his Braminical court. *He covered the body with a gold cloth, and shed a flood of tears.* He afterwards composed an epitaph for him whom he called "his father and his friend," and caused it to be inscribed on the stone which covers Swartz's grave, in one of the Christian churches of Tanjore.

The English also have pronounced a noble and affecting encomium on the character of this estimable Missionary.

The Honourable the East-India Company have sent out to Madras a monument of marble to be erected in the Church of St. Mary at that place, to the memory of the Rev. Mr. Swartz, inscribed with a suitable epitaph; and they announced it in their general letter, dated the 29th of October, 1806, "as a testimony of the deep sense they entertained of his transcendent merit, of his unwearied labours in the cause of religion and piety, and of his public services at Tanjore, where the influence of his name and character was, for a long course of years, productive of important benefits to the Company." The Honourable Court further adds: "On no subject has the Court of Directors been more unanimous than in their anxious desire to perpetuate the memory of this eminent person, and to *excite in others an emulation of his great example.*" They direct, finally, "that translations shall be made of the epitaph into the country languages, and published at Madras; and that the native inhabitants shall be encouraged to view the monument."

England's duty to make known the Revelation of the true God to her Indian subjects.

In the mean time, while men hold different opinions on the subject here, the great work goes on in the East. The Christians there will probably never hear of our dissensions; nor, if they should hear of them, would they be much interested about them. And on this point I judge it right to notice a very singular mistake, which appears to have existed on both sides of the question. It seems to have been understood that we have it in our power to prevent the progress of Christianity in India, if we wish to do so; if such a measure should be recommended by what is called "a wise policy." But we have *no* power to prevent the extension of the Christian religion in India. We have it in our power, indeed, greatly to *promote* it; but we have no power to *destroy* it. It would be as easy to extinguish Christianity in Great-Britain as in India. There are thousands of Christians in India—hundreds of thousands of Christians. And while we are contending here, whether it be a proper thing to convert the Hindoos, they will go on extending the bounds of their churches, keeping their jubilees, and enjoying the blessings of the Gospel, regardless of our opinions or authority.

The dispute in this country, relative to the efficiency of preaching the faith of Christ to the heathen world, is not unlike the dispute of the Jewish doctors in the Gospel, concerning our Saviour's power "to forgive sins." We read that our Lord had healed a woman, who was a sinner. And he said unto her, "Daughter, thy sins are forgiven; thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace." Then began the Pharisees to say within themselves, "Who is this that forgiveth sins also?" But she felt in herself that she was healed, and, leaving the doctors to dispute whether "her faith could save her or not," she departed in peace and joy.

So, while we are disputing here, whether the faith of Christ can save the heathens, the Gospel hath gone forth "for the healing of the nations." A congregation of Hindoos will assemble on the morning of the Sabbath, under the shade of a Banian tree, not one of whom, perhaps, ever heard of Great-Britain by name. There the Holy Bible is opened; the word of Christ is preached with eloquence and zeal; the affections are excited; the voice of prayer and praise is lifted up; and He who hath promised his presence, "when two or three are gathered together in his name, is there in the midst of them to bless them, according to his word." These scenes I myself have witnessed; and it is in this sense in particular I can say, "We have seen his Star in the East, and are come to worship him."

Thus far we have spoken of the success of the Gospel in Asia, by means of European preachers. But we shall now exhibit to you evidence from another source, from a new and unexpected quarter. We are now to declare what has been done, independently of *our* exertions, and in regions where we have no labourers, and no access. And this I do to show you, that whether we assist in the work or not, it is God's will *that it should begin*. You have hitherto been contemplating the Light in India. We are now to announce to you,

that a Light hath appeared in Arabia, and dawned, as it were, on the temple of Mecca itself.

Two Mahometans of Arabia, persons of consideration in their own country, have been lately converted to the Christian faith. One of them has already suffered martyrdom, and the other is now engaged in translating the Scriptures, and in concerting plans for the conversion of his countrymen. The name of the martyr was Abdallah; and the name of the other, who is now translating the Scriptures, is Sabat; or, as he is called since his Christian baptism, Nathaniel Sabat. Sabat resided in my house some time before I left India, and I had from his own mouth the chief part of the account which I shall now give to you. Some particulars I had from others. His conversion took place after the martyrdom of Abdallah, "to whose death he "was consenting;" and he related the circumstances to me with many tears.

Abdallah and Sabat were intimate friends, and being young men of family in Arabia, they agreed to travel together, and to visit foreign countries. They were both zealous Mahometans. Sabat is son of Ibrahim Sabat, a noble family of the line of Beni-Sabat, who trace their pedigree to Mahomet. The two friends left Arabia, after paying their adorations at the tomb of their prophet at Mecca, and travelled through Persia, and thence to Cabul. Abdallah was appointed to an office of state under Zemaun Shah, King of Cabul; and Sabat left him there, and proceeded on a tour through Tartary.

While Abdallah remained at Cabul, he was converted to the Christian faith by the perusal of a Bible (as is supposed) belonging to a Christian from Armenia, then residing at Cabul.* In the Mahometan states, it is death for a man of rank to become a Christian. Abdallah endeavoured for a time to conceal his conversion, but finding it no longer possible, he determined to flee to some of the Christian churches near the Caspian sea. He accordingly left Cabul in disguise, and had gained the great city of Bochara, in Tartary, when he was met in the streets of that city by his friend Sabat, who immediately recognisied him. Sabat had heard of his conversion and flight, and was filled with indignation at his conduct. Abdallah knew his danger, and threw himself at the feet of Sabat. He confessed that he was a Christian, and implored him, by the sacred tie of their former friendship, to let him escape with his life. "But Sir," said Sabat, when relating the story himself, "I *had no pity*. I caused "my servants to seize him, and I delivered him up to Morad Shah, "King of Bochara. He was sentenced to die, and a herald went "through the city of Bochara, announcing the time of his execution. "An immense multitude attended, and the chief men of the city. I "also went and stood near to Abdallah. He was offered his life, if he "would abjure Christ, the executioner standing by him with his "sword in his hand. 'No,' said he (as if the proposition were impossible to be complied with) 'I cannot abjure Christ.' Then one

* The Armenian Christians in Persia have among them a few copies of the Arabic Bible.

“ of his hands was cut off at the wrist. He stood firm, his arm hanging by his side with but little motion. A physician, by desire of the king, offered to heal the wound, if he would recant. He made no answer, but looked up stedfastly towards heaven, like Stephen the first martyr, his eyes streaming with tears. He did not look with anger towards *me*. He looked at me, but it was benignly, and with the countenance of forgiveness. His other hand was then cut off. But Sir,” said Sabat, in his imperfect English, “ he never *changed*, he never *changed*. And when he bowed his head to receive the blow of death, all Bochara seemed to say, ‘ What new thing is this?’ ”

Sabat had indulged the hope that Abdallah would have recanted when he was offered his life; but when he saw that his friend was dead, he resigned himself to grief and remorse. He travelled from place to place, seeking rest and finding none. At last he thought that he would visit India. He accordingly came to Madras about five years ago. Soon after his arrival, he was appointed by the English government a Mufti, or expounder of Mahometan law; his great learning, and respectable station in his own country, rendering him eminently qualified for that office. And now the period of his own conversion drew near. While he was at Visagapatam, in the Northern Circars, exercising his professional duties, Providence brought in his way a new Testament in Arabic.* He read it with deep thought, the Koran lying before him. He compared them together, and at length the truth of the word of God fell on his mind, as he expressed it, like a flood of light. Soon afterwards he proceeded to Madras, a journey of 300 miles, to seek Christian baptism; and having made a public confession of his faith, he was baptized by the Rev. Dr. Kerr, in the English Church at that place, by the name of Nathaniel, in the twenty-seventh year of his age.

Being now desirous to devote his future life to the glory of God, he resigned his secular employ, and came by invitation to Bengal, where he is now engaged in translating the Scriptures into the Persian language. This work hath not hitherto been executed, for want of a translator of sufficient ability. The Persian is an important language in the East, being the general language of Western Asia, particularly among the higher classes, and is understood from Calcutta to Damascus. But the great work which occupies the attention of this noble Arabian, is the promulgation of the Gospel among his own countrymen; and from the present fluctuations of religious opinion in Arabia, he is sanguine in his hopes of success. His first work is entitled, (*Neama Besharatin lil Arabi*), “ *Happy News for Arabia*,” written in the Nabuttee, or common dialect of the country. It contains an eloquent and argumentative elucidation of the truth of the Gospel, with copious authorities admitted by the Mahometans themselves, and particularly by the Wahabians. And prefixed to it, is an account of the conversion of the author, and an appeal to the

* One of those copies sent to India by the “ Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge.”

members of his well-known family in Arabia, for the truth of the facts.*

The following circumstance in the history of Sabat ought not to have been omitted. When his family in Arabia had heard that he had followed the example of Abdallah, and become a Christian, they despatched his brother to India, (a voyage of two months,) to assassinate him. While Sabat was sitting in his house at Visagapatam, his brother presented himself in the disguise of a Faqueer, or beggar, having a dagger concealed under his mantle. He rushed on Sabat, and wounded him. But Sabat seized his arm, and his servants came to his assistance. He then recognised his brother. The assassin would have become the victim of public justice, but Sabat interceded for his brother, and sent him home in peace, with letters and presents to his mother's house in Arabia.

And these, my brethren, are the instances I wished to lay before you, of the divine power of the Christian religion recently exemplified in the East. The conversions of Abdallah and Sabat seem to have been as evidently produced by the Spirit of God, as any conversion in the primitive church. Other instances have occurred in Arabia of a similar kind, and on the very borders of Palestine itself. These are like the solitary notices, which, in other nations, have announced the approach of general illumination. John Huss, and Jerom of Prague, were not, perhaps, more talked of in Europe, than Abdallah and Sabat are at this day, in Bucharria and Arabia.

What conclusion, then, shall we draw from these facts? It is this: that the time for diffusing our religion in the East is come. We shall notice some other particulars which encourage us to think that the time is come.

1. The minds of good men seem every where to be impressed with the duty of making the attempt. Nearly fifteen years have elapsed since it began, and their ardour is not abated. On the contrary, they gather strength as they proceed; new instruments are found, and liberal contributions are made by the people. Indeed, the consciences of men seem to bear witness that the work is of God.

The rapid success of this undertaking must appear almost incredible to those who are not acquainted with the fact. Translations of

* Sabat is now at Dinapore, in Bengal, with the Rev. Mr. Martyn, Fellow of St. John's College, Cambridge, Chaplain to the East-India Company, who is well qualified, by his knowledge of the Arabic and Persian languages, to superintend his labours. Mirza Fitrut, another celebrated Persian scholar, who visited England some years ago, is engaged as the coadjutor of Sabat in his translation. Mr. Martyn himself is translating the Scriptures into the Hindostanee language. Sabat, soon after his arrival in Bengal, visited the Baptist Missionaries at Serampore, and remained there for two months and a half, that is from August to October 1807. Ever since that period he has been at Dinapore. Mr. Martyn in his latest letters speaks of his friend Sabat in terms of affection and admiration. Sabat accounted himself at one time the best mathematician and logician in Arabia. Mr. Martyn was senior wrangler in mathematics at Cambridge in the year 1801.

the Scriptures are carried on, not only in the languages of India, Persia, and Arabia, but in those also of Burmah and China. Mount Caucasus, in the interior of Asia, is another centre of translation for the East, particularly for the numerous nations of the Tartar race. The Scriptures are preparing for the Malayan isles, and for the isles of the Pacific sea. The great continent of Africa has become the scene of different missions and translations. North and South America are sending forth the Scriptures. They are sent to the uttermost parts of the earth. They have been sent to Greenland, Labrador, and Austral Asia. We might almost say, "There is no speech nor language, where their voice is not heard."

And this spirit, for the diffusion of the truth, is not confined to Britain. It is found among good men of every Christian nation. Perhaps on this day prayers are offered up in behalf of the work, in Europe, Asia, Africa, and America. We are encouraged, then, to believe, that the time is come. in the first place, by the *consent* of good men. When I say good men, I mean religious and devout men, whose minds are not entirely occupied with the politics and affairs of this world, but who are "looking for the consolation of Israel;" as it is expressed in these words, "Thy kingdom come."

2. Another circumstance indicating that the time is at hand, is the general contemplation of the *prophecies*. The prophecies of Scripture are at this time pondered as seriously in Asia as in Europe. Even the Jews in the East, begin to study the oracles of their prophet Isaiah. And, what is more important, the prophecies begin to be published among heathen nations; and we may expect that every nation will soon be able to read the divine decree concerning itself.

3. The Holy Scriptures are translating into various languages.

When the Gospel was first to be preached to all nations, it was necessary to give a diversity of *tongues*; a *tongue* for each *nation*; and this was done by the Divine Power. But in this second promulgation, as it were, of the Gospel, the work will probably be carried on by a diversity of *translations*, a diversity of Scriptures; a *translation* for each *nation*. Instead of the gift of tongues, God, by his Providence, is giving to mankind a gift of Scriptures.

4. Another circumstance, which seems to testify that this work is of God, is the commotion in the bands of Infidelity *against it*. "He-rod is troubled, and all Jerusalem with him." A spirit hath issued from the mouth of infidelity, which rageth against Him whose Star appeared in the East, and would destroy the work in its *infancy*. It rageth not against the Romish Church in the East, though that is Christian; nor against the Armenian Church in the East, though that is Christian; nor against the Greek Church in the East, though that is Christian; but it rageth against the religion of the New Testament, that vital religion which aims at the conversion of the hearts of men.

Our Saviour hath said, "The Gospel shall be published among all nations." But these resist the Divine Word, and say it cannot be published in all nations. Our Lord hath said, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature." But these allege

that the Gospel cannot be preached to every creature, for that "the bond of superstition is too strong, or that the influence of Christianity is too weak."

These are unguarded words, and ought not to be heard in a Christian country. These are presumptuous words, arraigning the dispensation of the Most High. Such words as these were once spoken by the philosophers of Greece and Rome, but the Gospel prevailed, and first erected its dominion among *them*. In process of time the barbarous nations of Europe yielded to its sway, of which *we* are evidences at this day. And the nations of Asia will yield to the same power, and the truth will prevail, and the Gospel shall be preached over the whole world.

5. The last circumstance which we shall mention, as indicating that the period is come for diffusing the Light of Revelation, is the *revolution of nations*, and "the signs of the times."

Men of serious minds, who are erudite in Holy Scripture, and in the history of the world, look forward to great events. They judge of the future from the past. They have *seen* great events; events which, twenty years ago, would have appeared as incredible as the *conversion of the whole world to Christianity*.

At no former period have the judgments of heaven been so evidently directed against the nations which are called Christian, as at this day. It is manifest that God hath a controversy with his people, whatever be the cause. The *heathen* world enjoys a comparative tranquillity. But *Christian* nations are visited in quick succession by his awful judgments. What, then, is the cause of the judgments of God on his Christian people?

If we believe the declarations of God, in his Holy Word, we shall ascribe the judgment of Christian nations, at this day, to their rejecting, so generally, the testimony of Christ. That nation which first "denied his name before men," was first given up to suffer terrible judgments itself, and is now permitted to become the instrument of inflicting judgments on others. And this is agreeable to the ordinary course of God's just and retributive Providence. That kingdom which first seduced others by its infidelity, is now become the instrument of their punishment. The same retributive Providence is "making inquisition for the blood of the Saints." The massacres, fires, and anathemas of a former day, filled the minds of men with dismay. *We* forget these scenes, but all things are present with God. And as a nation cannot be punished as a nation in the next world for its iniquity, it must be punished in this world; and its "sins will be visited to the third and fourth generation." For a long time, (as men count time,) God kept silence; but the day of retribution is come at last, and the seats of the inquisition must be purged with blood.

From the fury of these desolating judgments *we* have hitherto been preserved. "Righteousness exalteth a nation." (Prov. xvi. 24.) It would appear as if God would thus do honour to a Church holding pure doctrine, and to a State united with that Church which hath defended the true Faith, amidst the superstitions and corruptions

which have so long reigned in the Christian world. Latterly, indeed, it should seem as if God had selected this nation, as formerly his chosen people Israel, to preserve among men a knowledge of the true religion; for we have been called to stand up, as it were, "between the living and the dead," in defence of Christian principles. And although it be true that we have fought rather for our country than for our religion, yet it is also true that religion is, in present circumstances, identified, in a certain degree, with the existence of our country. And we trust, that it is in the purpose of Providence, by saving the one, to save the other also.

Let this nation, then, weigh well what it is, in God's moral administration of the world, which saves *her* at this period. Let her beware of infidelity, and of that moral *taint* which ever accompanies it. Is it true that any of our chief men begin to "laugh at vice," like Voltaire! Let us recal to view the experience of France. We beheld infidelity gradually infecting that nation, even as poison passeth through the human frame, till the whole body of the great was saturated. Then was their iniquity full, and God's judgment began. Now, though it be true that the faith of our Church is pure, that "she holdeth the head," that she is founded on the Prophets, Evangelists, and Apostles; though it be true that there is in the midst of her a large body of righteous persons, men possessing sound learning, enlightened zeal, and pure charity; men who are called by our Saviour "the light of the world," and "the salt of the earth;" yet it is equally certain that the greater part of her members are not of that description. It is certain that the *spot* of moral disease begins to be visible at a distance. And we know not but that the true state of the nation may be this, that there is just "salt" enough, (to use the figure of the Gospel,) to preserve the body from corruption.

Let us then weigh well *what it is* which, in the present circumstances of the world, saves this nation. If it be the divine pleasure to save *us*, while other nations are destroyed, it cannot be on account of the *greatness of our empire*, or of our *dominion by sea*, or of our *extended commerce*. For why should the moral Governor of the world respect such circumstances as *these*? But if we are spared, it will be, we believe, on account of our *maintaining the pure religion of Christ as the religion of our land*, and of our *promoting the knowledge of that religion*, and of the *blessed principles which accompany it, throughout the rest of the world*. This may be a consideration worthy of the divine regard. And this, though it be no pledge of our duration, is the chief assurance of our perpetuity. On this chiefly, (*viz.* our being an instrument of good to the world,) must depend our hope of surviving the shocks and convulsions which are now overwhelming the other nations of Europe.

Let us now recapitulate the evidences noticed in this discourse, which encourage us to believe that the time is come for disseminating the knowledge of Christianity in the heathen world.

1. The facility with which Christianity is propagated generally in Asia, wherever the attempt has been made.

2. The peculiar success that has attended our own endeavours to promote the religion of the Bible.

3. The conversion of illustrious persons in Asia, by means of the Bible alone.

4. The translation of the Bible into almost all the languages of Asia; promising, as it were, a second promulgation of Christianity to the East.

5. The general contemplation of the prophecies in Europe and Asia.

6. The general commotion among the bands of infidelity, who are hostile to the design, both in Europe and Asia.

7. The consent of good men in all Christian nations, to promote the design. And,

8. The preservation of our own country, to carry on the work, amidst the ruin or infidelity of other nations.

Behold, then, my brethren, the great undertaking, for the promotion of which you are now assembled. If it were in the power of this assembly to diffuse the blessings of religion over the whole world, would it not be done? Would not all nations be blessed? You perceive that some take a lively interest in this subject, while others are less concerned. What is the reason of this difference? It is this: Every man, who hath felt the influence of religion on his own heart, will desire to extend the blessing to the rest of mankind; and no one who hath lived without a concern about religion, will be solicitous to communicate to others a gift which he values not himself. At the same time, perhaps, he is not willing to be thought hostile to the work. But there is no *neutrality* here. "He that is not with Christ," in maintaining his kingdom on earth, "is against Him." And so it appeareth to "God, who searcheth the heart." Every one of us is now acting a part in regard to this matter, for which he must give an account hereafter. There is no one, however peculiar he may reckon his situation or circumstances, who is exempted from this responsibility. For this is the criterion of obedience in the sight of God, even our conduct in receiving or rejecting the "record which God hath given of his Son." And no man "receiveth this record" in sincerity and truth, who will not desire to make it known to others. You have heard of the conversion of Mahometans and Hindoos. Yes, our Lord hath said, "Many shall come from the East and from the West, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of Heaven; but the children of the kingdom shall be cast out."

Begin, then, at this time, the solemn inquiry, not merely into the general truth of Christ's religion, but into its divine and converting power. You observe that in this discourse I have distinguished between the *name* of Christianity and the *thing*. For it seems there are some who have departed from the ancient principles of our reformation, who admit the *existence* of the Spirit of God, but deny his *influence*; who agree not with the Apostle Paul, that the "Gospel cometh to some in *word* only," and to others "in *power*, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance;" and who seem to forget what our Saviour hath said of the "*broad road*" and the "*narrow way*." Begin,

then, the important inquiry; for "the time is short," and this question will soon be brought to issue before an assembled world. In the mean time I shall offer to you my testimony on this subject.

The operation of the grace of God, in "renewing a right spirit within us," (Ps. li.) is a doctrine professed by the whole faithful Church of Christ militant here on earth. The great author of our religion hath himself delivered the doctrine, in the most solemn manner to the world. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." *Verily, verily:* it is an undoubted truth, an unchangeable principle of the heavenly dispensation, that except a man be renewed in mind by the Spirit of God, he shall not have power even to *see* or behold the kingdom of God. What, though many in our day deny this doctrine? A whole nation denied a doctrine, greater, if possible, than this. The very name and religion of Christ have been denied in our time. But if our Saviour hath declared any one doctrine of the Gospel more clearly than another, it is this of a spiritual conversion; and the demonstration of its truth is found in all lands where his gospel is known.* Christians, differing in almost every thing else, agree in this. Differing in language, customs, colour, and in country; differing in forms of worship and Church government, in external rites and in internal order; they yet agree in the doctrine of a change of heart, through faith in Christ; for this hath been the grand characteristic of Christ's religion among all nations, tongues, and kindreds, where the Gospel hath been preached, through all ages down to this day. This is, in fact, that which distinguishes the religion of God, in Asia, from the religions of *men*. In every part of the earth where I myself have been, this doctrine is proclaimed, as the hope of the sinner and the glory of the Saviour. And again, in every place it is opposed, by the same evil passions of the human heart. In rude nations, the same arguments are brought against it, in substance, which are used here in a learned country. Among ignorant nations, a term of reproach is attached to serious piety, even as it is here among a refined people; *thereby proving* what our Lord hath taught, That the superior goodness inculcated by his Gospel would not be agreeable to all men; and that some "would revile and speak evil of his disciples, for righteousness' sake;" *thereby proving* what the Apostle Paul hath taught, That "the Cross of Christ is an offence" to the

* The late learned and judicious PALEY has given his dying testimony to the truth of this doctrine. (See his Sermons, p. 119). "A change so entire, so deep, so important as this, I do allow to be a *CONVERSION*; (he had said before, 'there must be a revolution of principle; there must be a revolution within;') and no one who is in the situation above described, *can be saved*, without undergoing it; and he must necessarily be both sensible of it at the time and remember it all his life afterwards. It is too momentous an event ever to be forgot. A man might as easily forget his escape from shipwreck. Whether it was sudden or whether it was gradual, if it was effected (and the fruits will prove that) it was a *true conversion*; and every such person may justly both believe and say it himself, that he was converted at a particular assignable time."

PALEY here speaks the language of the true Church of Christ in all ages and nations.

natural pride of the human heart; that "the carnal mind is enmity against God;" and that "the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, because they are spiritually discerned."

I have thought it right, my brethren, to deliver to you my testimony at this time; to assure you that the Gospel which begins to enlighten the East, is not "another gospel," as the Apostle speaks, but the same as your own. There is one Sun; there is one Gospel. "There is one Lord, one Faith, one Baptism;" and there is one JUDGMENT. May we be all prepared to give our answer on that day!

My brethren, you are now invited to contribute some aid toward the extension of the religion of Christ. You are now called on to give *your* testimony to its truth. You are now, as it were, to present "your gifts" before Him who was born Saviour of the world; and to send back those "glad tidings" to the East, which the East once sent to you, namely, that the Light is come, that "the Desire of all nations is come." Let every one who prays with his lips, "Thy kingdom come," prove to himself, at this time, his own sincerity, that he really desires in his heart that the kingdom of Christ should come. Blessed is the man, who accounts it not only a duty, but a privilege, to dispense "the word of Life" amongst his fellow-men. It is, indeed, a privilege, and so you will account it hereafter, when you shall behold all nations assembled before the judgment-seat of Christ. You will then reflect with joy that you were enabled, at this time, "to confess His name before men," and to afford some aid for the "increase of his government" and glory upon earth. And let every one who lends this aid accompany it with prayer, that the act may be blessed to himself in awakening his mind more fully to the unutterable importance of the everlasting Gospel.

APPENDIX.

INTERESTING INTELLIGENCE FROM INDIA.

From the London Evangelical Magazine, for October, 1807.

A LETTER has been received from the Rev. Mr. Ringeltaube, to the Secretary, dated Palamcotta, Feb. 7, 1807. He has acquired the language so as to write it correctly, and speak it with but little hesitation.

Mr. Ringeltaube has also sent his journal, from Sept. 12, 1806, to Feb. 6, 1807. He mentions that Dr. Buchanan had requested the loan of his Bible in the Tamul language, as he was about to commence the Malayalam translation of the Scriptures immediately, there being 200,000 Christians in Malayalam, who are ready to receive it. Even the Romish bishop, it is said, signified his consent to the circulation of the Scriptures among his people. The Doctor observes in his letter to Mr. Ringeltaube, that he has had singular success in obtaining ancient manuscripts, in Hebrew, Syriac, &c. Mr. R. greatly rejoiced at this good news; and sent him his only copy of that Bible without delay.

Ecclesiastical antiquities in India.

[We have been favoured by a respectable correspondent in India, with a copy of a REPORT, presented by a pious clergyman, at the request of the Governor of Madras, concerning the state of the ancient Christians in Cochin and Travancore. This Report is so curious and so interesting, that we shall give the whole of it to our readers, assured that they will esteem it, as we do, a most valuable and important document. It is followed by an account of the Rev. Dr. Buchanan's discoveries.]

REPORT of the Senior Chaplain of Fort St. George, to the Right Honourable Lord William Bentinck, Governor of Madras, on the state of the Christians inhabiting the kingdoms of Cochin and Travancore; with an article of interesting literary intelligence, containing an account of the discoveries made by the Rev. Dr. Buchanan, in the course of his investigations undertaken by order of the supreme government in Bengal.

“Public Department.

“*To the Rev. Dr. Kerr, Senior Chaplain of Fort St. George.*

“Rev. Sir,

“The Right Honourable the Governor in Council, being desirous of availing himself of your vicinity to the Malabar coast, to obtain every possible information in regard to the establishment, &c. of the Christian Religion in that part of the peninsula, I am directed by his lordship in council, to desire that so soon as the state of your health and the season will permit, you will proceed to the provinces on that coast; and you will forward to me, for the information of government, such accounts as you may be able to collect, of the first introduction of Christianity into India—of the arrival of the different sects who have been, or may be, in existence—of their general history, and of the persecutions to which they may have been exposed—of their success in making proselytes—of their church establishment, and of the source from which they are maintained, and with all other circumstances connected with this important subject: I have the honour to be, rev. sir, your most obedient humble servant,

Fort St. George,

June 28, 1806.

(Signed) G. G. KEBLE,

Sec. to Government.”

“*To the Right Honourable Lord William C. Bentinck, Governor in Council, &c. &c.*

“MY LORD,

“When at Mysore, I was honoured by the receipt of Mr. secretary Keble's letter, dated the 28th June last; and finding my general health much improved, I resolved to proceed to the Malabar coast, in search of the information required by your lordship in council, regarding the Christians inhabiting that part of the peninsula:—an investigation which I have found as interesting as it is important, whether it regards humanity at large, or as it is connected, in a political view, with the British interests in this country.

“To view the extensive field pointed out for my inquiries minutely, would require much more of my time than could be well spared from my other public avocations; and as I learned the Rev. Dr. Br-

chanan was nominated by the government of Bengal, to travel over the same ground, for purposes somewhat similar, I did not think it incumbent on me to take up more than a general view of the subject, and I directed my attention accordingly, not so much to details as to matters of comprehensive import.

“The first object to which the orders of government refer, is, to an account of the introduction of Christianity into this country.

“There can be no doubt whatever, that the St. Thomê Christians settled on the Malabar coast at a very early period of the Christian church; from whence they, at one time, spread in various directions as far even as Mileapoor, and St. Thomas’s Mount;—but to derive *authentic* information as to the time of their arrival, is at present no easy task.

“From the confusion arising from the imperfection of Hindoo chronology, from the desire which these Christians have to derive their origin from the earliest possible times, (which may perhaps have introduced false traditions among them), and as all their authentic records are reported to have been destroyed during the persecutions of the church of Rome; from all these circumstances, whether we refer to the Hindoo accounts, to the St. Thomê Christians themselves, or to their persecutors, the Roman Catholics, we are not likely to arrive at any certain conclusion as to the exact time of their establishment in Malabar. Some circumstances, however, may be collected from *undoubted authority*, by which it may be inferred, that they have been for nearly fifteen centuries established in India; for we find, in ecclesiastical history, that at the first council at Nice, in the year 325, a bishop from India was amongst the number composing that memorable synod; and, in the creeds and doctrines of the Christians of Malabar, internal evidence exists of their being a primitive church; for the supremacy of the Pope is denied, and the doctrine of Transubstantiation never has been held by them; and they regarded and still regard the worship of images as idolatrous, and the doctrine of purgatory to be fabulous:—moreover, they never admitted as sacraments, extreme unction, marriage, or confirmation: all which facts may be substantiated on reference to the acts of the Synod established by Don Alexis De Menezes, archbishop of Goa, at Udiampier, in the year 1599.

“The history of this council will be found most ably detailed in a work printed in French, and entitled, “The history of Christianity in India,” published at the Hague, in the year 1724, by La Croze, the celebrated librarian to the king of Prussia.

“The object of this work was to deduce, from authentic materials, the rise, progress, and establishment of Christianity in the East; and to hold up to disgrace, and to merited indignation, the bigotted and unworthy conduct of the Roman Catholic church, in the persecution set on foot by her emissaries, under her avowed sanction, against the primitive Christians, who were found settled on the coast of Malabar; and La Croze seems to have discharged his duty to the public in a most faithful, interesting, and able manner.

“When the Portuguese first arrived in this country, in the beginning of the sixteenth century, they found a Christian church

using the Syrio-Chaldaic language, established in the neighbourhood of Cranganore; and, though it was published to the world many centuries before that period, that such a church existed, yet we find their ignorance expressed in the wonder which it excited.

“ These Christians met the Portuguese as natural friends and allies, and rejoiced at their coming; but the Portuguese were much disappointed at finding the St. Thomê Christians firmly fixed in the tenets of a primitive church; and soon adopted plans for drawing away from their pure faith, this innocent, ingenuous, and respectable people: however, after using for nearly a century, all the customary arts and abominable persecutions of the church of Rome, to no purpose, Don Alexis De Meneses, the archbishop of Goa, appeared amongst them; and, by his commanding influence, his zeal, and his learning, and on the authority of what he called the Council of Udi-
amper, forced the Syrian Metropolitan, his priests, and people, into the Roman pale. The archbishop, however, had not long quitted the scene of this triumph of bigotry, ere the people sighed for their old religion, and cherished it in private; but on the 22d of May, 1653, they held a congress at Alingatte, and great numbers, headed by their Metropolitan, revolted publicly from the Romish communion; nor has all the influence of the Roman pontiff, and the kings of Portugal, been able to draw them away again from their old faith.

“ Leaving the history of this interesting people, which is affectingly delineated in La Croze’s book, I shall, in this report, confine myself more particularly to the existing state of Christianity in Malabar; and, in order that your lordship may have the subject clearly before you, I shall consider each sect of Christians by itself, under the head of, 1st, St. Thomê, or Jacobite Christians;—2dly, The Syrian Catholics, who have been forced from the Jacobite Church into the Romish pale; and, 3dly, The Latin Church.

St. Thomê, or Jacobite Christians.

“ These people, who still retain their ancient creed and usages, consider themselves as the descendants of the flock established by St. Thomas, who is generally esteemed the Apostle of the East. Their ancestors emigrated from Syria, and the Syrio-Chaldaic is the language in which their church service is still performed. They admit no images within their churches, but a figure of the Virgin Mary with the child Jesus in her arms, which is considered merely as an ornament, and not a subject for idolatrous worship. They are generally denominated by the country people, Nazaranee Mapilles. Nazaranee is obviously derived from Nazareth; but the origin of the word *Mapillah* is variously accounted for;—by some it is ingeniously supposed to refer to the Virgin and Child, the only image admitted within their churches; as *Ma* implies *Mother*, in various languages, derived from the Sungscrit; and *Pillah*, Child. Others again, construe the term to indicate the rank originally conferred on these Christians by the sovereign of Malabar. *Poolah*, signifies a *class*, in a state synonymous with our secretaries. *Ma* or *Maha* signifies *great* or *superior*. The term *Mapillah* is indiscriminately applied to Jews and Musselmen as to these Christians, distinguishing each by the prefix of the Jew, Syrian, or Nazaranee, or Musselman.

" It is certain that grants of honour and emolument were formerly possessed by these Christians, given to them by a king of Malabar, named Peremaul, engraven on copper, five of which engravings are still in existence; a *fac-simile* of which I have seen in the possession of the resident of Travancore.

" It has been long believed, that these Christians held the tenets of the Nestorian heresy, and that they were obliged to leave their own country in consequence of persecution: however, it appears that the creed which they now follow denies that heresy, and seems to coincide in several points with the creed of St. Athanasius, but without its damnable clauses.

" Baron Von Wrede has written a memoir on the subject of these Christians, which appeared in the 7th volume of the Asiatic Researches, and which has the merit of calling our attention to these people; though it is no better than a lame transcript of information, which may be fully and satisfactorily obtained in La Croze's book, from whence every material part of that memoir is obviously taken: indeed, wherever the Baron departs from his author, he becomes less interesting, or misleads his reader. That the Christians in Malabar were early taught the tenets of Nestorius, is proved by La Croze, on the direct authority of Cosmas, an Egyptian merchant, (himself a Nestorian,) who published his voyage to India in the year 547. It seems, however, not improbable that Christianity had been planted on these shores, long before the time of Nestorius; and, I am inclined to regard the tradition of its having spread hither in the age of the Apostles, as very far from fabulous.*

" With respect to their religious tenets, writers may and will disagree: upon such subjects human reason avails nothing. The disputes which on these points have agitated the world, are in general no better than the perverse offspring of verbal differences.

" The following is a version of the present creed of these people, being a written communication from the Metropolitan to the Resident at Travancore:

" In the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, We, the Christians, believers in the religion of Jesus Christ, subject to the jurisdiction of Mar Ignatius, patriarch of Antioch, being loyal Jacobians,† hold the following creed:

* Eusebius informs us that there were Christians in India as early as the year 189, who had the Gospel of St. Matthew in Hebrew, which they declared was received from St. Bartholomew.

† Eastern Christians who renounce the communion of the Greek church, who differ from it both in doctrine and worship may be comprehended under two distinct classes. To the former belong the Monophysites, or Jacobites, so called from Jacob Albardai, who declare it as their opinion that in the Saviour of the world there is only one nature; while the latter comprehends the followers of Nestorius, frequently called Chaldeans, from the country where they principally reside, and who suppose that there are two distinct persons or natures in the Son of God. The Monophysites are subdivided into two sects or parties, the one African and the other Asiatic. At the head of the Asiatics is the patriarch of Antioch, who resides for the most part in the monastery of St. Ananias, which is situated near the city of Merdin, and sometimes at Merdin, his episcopal seat; as also at Amida,

" We believe in the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, three Persons in one God, neither confounding the persons, nor dividing the substance, one in three, and three in one.

" The Father generator,—the Son generated,—and the Holy Ghost proceeding.

" None is before nor after other in majesty, honour, might, and power; co-equal, unity in trinity, and trinity in unity.

" We do not believe with Aerius and Eunomius, that there are three different and separate substances.

" We do not believe, as Sabellius believes, by confusion of substance.

" We do not believe, as Macedonius said, that the Holy Ghost is less than the Father and Son.

" We do not believe, as Mawney and †Marcianus said, that the body of Christ was sent down from heaven.

" We do not believe as Julianus‡ said, that Christ was only man.

" We do not hold, as Nestorius, the doctrine of two natures, and two substances in the Messiah.

" We do not believe, as the Chalcedonians said, that there are two natures in the Messiah.

" But we believe, by the doctrine of the Trinity, that the Son is co-equal with the Father, without beginning or end; that in the appointed time, through the disposition of the Father and Holy Ghost, without disjoining from the right side of the Father, he appeared on earth for the salvation of mankind—that he was born of the Virgin Mary, through the means of the Holy Ghost, and was incarnate, God and Man. So that in the union of the divine and human nature, there was one nature and one substance—So we believe."

" The service in their church is performed very nearly after the manner of the church of England; and when the Metropolitan was told that it was hoped that one day an union might take place between the two churches, he seemed pleased at the suggestion.

" The present Metropolitan, Mar Donisius, is now old and infirm, but a very respectable character, and of the most venerable and prepossessing appearance. A person has been sent from Mousul, a city in Mesopotamia, to succeed to his station, in the event of his decease;—but this stranger, ignorant of the language of the country, with the character of being violent in his temper, and not averse, as it is supposed, to the views of the Romish church, it is to be hoped, will be

Aleppo, and other Syrian cities. The government of this prelate is too extensive; and the churches over which he presides too numerous to admit of his performing himself all the duties of his high office; and therefore a part of the administration of the pontificate is given to a kind of colleague, who is called the Maphrian or Primate of the East, and whose doctrines and discipline are said to be adopted by the eastern church beyond the Tigris. This primate used formerly to reside at Tauris, a city on the frontiers of Armenia; but his present habitation is the monastery of St. Matthew, which is in the neighbourhood of Mousul, a city of Mesopotamia. It is further observable, that all the patriarchs of the Jacobites assume the denomination of Ignatius.—Mosheim, vol. 4. Section xi. page 257.

† These I suppose might be Manes and Marcian.

‡ Perhaps Julian, Bishop of Halicarnassus.

prevented from ever taking charge of this precious remnant of a pure and valuable people.

"The Metropolitan has several archdeacons and deacons under him, who act as Vicar-Generals. They have fifty-five churches: and the number of their people, as given in to the Resident, is estimated at 23,000.

"The residence of their Metropolitan is at Candennatte, twelve or fourteen miles inland from Cochin. In some of their churches divine service is performed in the Syrian and Latin ritual alternately, by the priests of the Christians of St Thomê, who have adhered to their ancient rites, and those who have been united to the church of Rome.* When the latter have celebrated mass, they carry away the images from the church before the others enter.

"The character of these people is marked by a striking superiority over the Heathens in every moral excellence; and they are remarkable for their veracity and plain dealing. They are extremely attentive to their religious duties; and abide by the decision of their Priests and Metropolitan in all cases, whether in spiritual, or, as I heard, in temporal affairs. They are respected very highly by the Nairs, who do not consider themselves defiled by associating with them, though it is well known that the Nairs are the most particular of all the Hindoos in this respect; and the Rajahs of Travancore and Cochin, admit them to rank next to Nairs. Their numbers, it is conjectured, are underrated in the statement given to the Resident, as it is generally supposed that they may be estimated at 70 or 80,000. They are not persecuted; but they are not permitted to make converts, by the governments under which they reside; and it is supposed, that many respectable Hindoos would be happy to join their sect, were it not for this circumstance: but at present they suffer, as far as I can learn, no other hardship.

"If good men from Syria could be obtained, not as parish priests, but to superintend and regulate their concerns, I conceive it would be a great blessing to these good people.

"The direct protection of the British government has been already extended to them; but as they do not reside within the British territories, I am somewhat doubtful how far it may be of use to them.

"To unite them to the church of England, would, in my opinion, be a most noble work: and it is most devoutly to be wished for, that those who have been driven into the Roman pale might be recalled to their ancient church; a measure which it would not, I imagine, be difficult to accomplish, as the country governments would, it is supposed, second any efforts to that purpose.

"Their occupations are various as those of other Christians; but they are chiefly cultivators and artizans; and some of them possess a comfortable, if not a splendid independence. Their clergy marry in the same manner as Protestants. Their residence is entirely inland."

Syrian Roman Catholics.

"These people, as stated above, were constrained to join the Latin church, after a long struggle for the power of maintaining their

* This shows a spirit of toleration and Christian liberality, very different from the bigotry of the Romish church.

purity and independence; and still appear a people perfectly distinct from the Latin church, being allowed to chant and perform all the services of the church of Rome in the Syrio-Chaldaic language by a dispensation from the Pope. They live under the authority of the Metropolitan of Cranganore and the Bishop of Verapoli, and dress differently from other priests. They wear a white surplice, while the priests of the Latin communion wear black gowns, like the Capuchin friars of Madras. The Roman Catholic Syrians, it is thought, are much more numerous than the members of the original church. Their clergy are spread through the ancient churches, and, by retaining their language, and acting under the direction of the church of Rome, they leave no means unessayed to draw over their primitive brethren to the Latin communion. It appears to me, that they are allowed to use their original language, and to frequent the original church, entirely with this view; and as far as I can learn, their numbers are gaining ground. There are said to be eighty-six parishes of Roman Catholic Syrians subject to the dioceses of Cranganore and Verapoli. Their priests to the number of four hundred, are styled Catanars, which is a Syrian appellation; their congregations are reported at 90,000 (old and young included) agreeably to the last return transmitted to Rome.—There is an inferior order of priests, who are called Chiamas, in number about 120. The Hindoos have, as far as I can learn, a much greater respect for the Christians of the original church, than for the converts of the Latin communion; which may be accounted for by their not associating with the lower orders of people. Attached to each church is a convent, where the Catanars reside in community, there being three, four, or five to each church. The service is performed weekly, in rotation.—There is a seminary at the college of Verapoli for the education of the Syrio-Roman Catholics, and also one for the Latin church. The Syrio-Roman Catholics are chiefly engaged, as already mentioned, in drawing their ancient brethren within the Romish pale; but it appears that some of them have been employed formerly in extending the general object of conversion over the peninsula. I saw one of their churches, at a village near Pillambaddy, about thirty miles on the Madras side of Trichinopoly; and I heard of several others. They had at this village adopted the use of a sawmy coach, like that of the Heathens, with the Crucifix and the Virgin Mary in it, instead of the Hindoo sawmy.—Their church was much out of repair: and the ignorance of the few Christians remaining in charge of it is striking: the letters I, N, R, I, over the figure of our Saviour on the cross, being absolutely inverted; nor did the priest who visits them ever notice the circumstance. They read prayers in Malabar, according to the ritual of the church of Rome. Their church appears to have been once respectable, but is now fallen into decay.”

Latin Roman Catholics.

“ Within the provinces of Travancore and Cochin there are one archbishop and two bishops:—the archbishop of Cranganore and the bishops of Cochin and Verapoli.

“ The two former have sees, the latter is titular. The archbishop of Cranganore and the bishop of Cochin are nominated by the queen of Portugal, after the following manner:—Three names are sent, (when

either of these sees become vacant,) by the sovereign of Portugal to the Pope; and the Roman Pontiff is bound to select the name that stands first, and to issue his brevet or patent accordingly.

"They are subject in all spiritual concerns to the primate of Goa; who has power also during a vacancy, of sending from Goa a *locum tenens*, who is styled *Padre Governador*.—Both sees are at this moment filled by such.

"The titular Bishop, who resides at the college of Verapoli, is appointed directly by the Pope, and is subject to no jurisdiction but that of his holiness, or the propaganda at Rome.—This mission being more susceptible of control and regulation than the others, has been countenanced by the honourable company, as the following copy of a Proclamation issued by the government of Bombay will show.

" PROCLAMATION.

"The honourable the Court of Directors of the honourable English East India Company, having been pleased to order that the ecclesiastical jurisdiction of the Roman Catholic churches under this government, shall be withdrawn from the Archbishop of Goa, and restored to the Carmelite Bishop of the apostolic mission, the President in Council has accordingly resolved, that the said restitution shall take place on the first of the ensuing month; from which time he hereby enjoins all the Catholic inhabitants in Bombay, as well as the several factories and settlements subordinate thereto, to pay due obedience in spiritual matters to the said bishops, on pain of incurring the severe displeasure of government.

"By order of the honourable the Governor in Council,
 "Bombay Castle. } (Signed) WILLIAM PAGE,
 "2d Aug. 1791." } Secretary.

"The priests attached to the college of Verapoli are all Carmelites, united to the apostolic mission at Bombay, but not subject to it. The jurisdiction of each is not marked by distinct bounds; the parishes and churches being so intermingled, that it is difficult to form a right notion of their extent. The bishop of Cochin, however, may be said to have a control over all the Romish churches situated on the seacoast, immediately, (with few exceptions,) from Cochin to Ramnad, and thence round the whole island of Ceylon: the churches are numerous; but as they are in general poor, and are obliged to be supplied with priests from Goa, it would appear that one vicar holds, upon an average, five or six churches. The number of Christians composing these churches must be great, as all and every of the fishermen are Roman Catholics.—The Bishop of Cochin usually resides at Quilon. There are very few European clergy, (not above seven or eight,) under the three jurisdictions, and none of them men of education; and it cannot be expected that the native priests, who have been educated at Goa, or at the seminary at Verapoli, should know much beyond their *missals* and *rituals*.—The Latin communicants, in the diocese of Verapoli, are estimated at 35,000 —The catechuman suffers no persecution on account of his religion, when once converted; but the country governments are excessively jealous upon this point, and do their utmost to discountenance any conversion.

"The converts are from various casts, viz. Chegas or Teers,—Muckwas and Pullers; and there can be no doubt but that many of higher casts would be baptized, if they did not dread the displeasure of their governments.

"It is well known that the Roman religion was introduced by the Portuguese, at the commencement of the sixteenth century; the number converted in each year, upon an average, reach to nearly 300:—the number of course, naturally diminishes. The morality of the converts is very loose; and they are generally inferior in this respect to the heathens of the country."

GENERAL OBSERVATIONS.

"Reflecting on the whole subject, several suggestions present themselves to my mind; and I shall not be considered as deviating from the line of my profession, or the intention of your Lordship, in calling for my Report, by offering some opinions to government, which in a moral and political view, seem of the highest importance. It appears, from the foregoing statement, that pure Christianity is far, very far, from being a religion for which the highest cast of Hindoos have any disrespect; and that it is the abuse of the Christian name, under the form of the Romish religion, to which they are averse. We have, my Lord, been sadly defective in what we owed to God and man, since we have had a footing in this country, as well by departing most shamefully from our Christian profession ourselves, as in withholding those sources of moral perfection from the natives, which true Christianity alone can establish; and, at the same time, we have allowed the Romanists to steal into our territories, to occupy the ground we have neglected to cultivate, and to bring an odium on our pure and honourable name as Christians. The evil would be less, were it not well known that many of the Romish priests, and their people, who have thus been allowed to grow numerous under our authority, are supposed to be far from well affected to the government under which they reside; indeed, in many instances, the Roman clergy are the natural subjects of nations at enmity with ourselves, at the same time that they are eminently qualified by their influence in their profession, to do us the greatest mischief, by spreading disaffection throughout every part of the extended country. The Roman Catholic religion, my Lord, I believe I may say, without offence to truth or charity, has almost always been made a political engine in the hands of its government; and we must be blinded indeed, by our own confidence, if we do not calculate on its being so used in this great and rich country, where it has established a footing amongst an ignorant people; especially when it is so well understood that our eastern possessions have been a subject of the greatest jealousy to all the rival nations of Europe. In my humble opinion, my Lord, the error has been in not having long ago established free*

* To give English morals to the natives in their purity, we must, I imagine, make them read English books. Translations have hitherto been very defective in the different country languages; besides, they must be extremely circumscribed in number. I do not think the natives will come to us freely but to learn English. This they consider as the key to fortune; and, on the coast the most strict of the Bramins will have little hesitation,

schools throughout every part of this country, by which the children of the natives might have learned our language, and got acquainted with our morality. Such an establishment would, ere this, have made the people at large fully acquainted with the divine spring, from whence alone British virtue must be acknowledged to flow. This would have made them better acquainted with the principles by which we are governed: they would have learned to respect our laws, to honour our feelings, and to follow our maxims: whereas they appear to me, generally speaking, at this moment, as ignorant of their masters as on their first landing on these shores. I speak not of interfering with their religious prejudices, or endeavouring to convert the natives by an extraordinary effort on the part of the British government. Conversion, in my opinion, must be the consequence which would naturally flow from our attention to their moral instruction, and their more intimate acquaintance with the English character.

“ I do not mention this as an experiment, the result of which might be considered as problematical: the experiment has been already made, and the consequences have proved commensurate with the highest expectation which reasonable men could entertain. The Danish Mission, united with the Society for propagating the Gospel, have sent some good men into this country, with the laudable view of spreading true Christianity throughout our Eastern possessions; and the names of Swartz, Gerrické, and others, will ever be remembered by numbers of our Asiatic subjects, of every cast and description, with veneration and affection: and there are happily still living some amongst us of the same character.

“ It is true, that the object they had more particularly in view, has, in some measure, failed: and few good converts, it is generally imagined, have been made; but let it be remembered also, that they have laboured under every possible disadvantage; they have scarcely enjoyed a mere toleration under our government, and received no kind of assistance whatsoever; that they were few in number, and perhaps I may say, without injustice; that they erred, (as the best might err,) in the means which they adopted: but that they have done much good by the purity of their lives, and by their zeal in spreading instruction. This will admit of no denial; and I doubt not that I may say, without the danger of contradiction, that few and poor as these men have been, without authority or power to support them, a greater and more extended portion of heartfelt respect for the European character has been diffused by their means throughout this country, than by all the other Europeans put together. We have, in my humble opinion, my Lord, kept ourselves too far from the natives: we have despised their ignorance, without attempting to remove it,—and we have considered their timidity, (the natural

as far as I can learn, in permitting their children to attend a free school for the purpose of learning it; for they despise us too much to suppose there is any danger of overturning the principles of Braminism. But their ill founded, ridiculous principles must be shaken to the very foundation, by the communication of such liberal knowledge as a Christian can instil into the minds of youth, and fix there by means of English books; and all this, without making any alarming attack directly on the religion of the Hindoos.

result of their being trampled upon by one race of conquerors after another,) also as an object for our contempt; at the same time, that we have viewed the cunning of their character, (which is ever the natural resource of ignorance and weakness,) as the completion of all that is vile and deceitful.—Thus have we continued a system of neglect towards the interests of our native subjects, in points the most essential to their every happiness, throughout the whole of our governments in this country. Fain, my Lord, would I see a change in this particular; and I seize the opportunity which the present moment affords, to press the justice and the policy of the measure on the attention of your lordship's government.

Having the honour to remain, with the highest respect, my Lord, your Lordship's faithful, and obedient humble servant,

(Signed) R. H. KERR,
Senior chaplain of Fort St. George.

“Madras, Nov. 3, 1806.”

LITERARY INTELLIGENCE.

“The Rev. Dr. Buchanan, who left Bengal some months ago, with the view of proceeding to Travancore, to inquire into the state of the Syrian Christians, arrived in that country about the beginning of November last, having travelled from Calcutta to Cape Comorin by land. His highness the Rajah of Travancore was pleased to afford to Dr. Buchanan the most liberal assistance in the prosecution of his inquiries. About the middle of November, Dr. Buchanan proceeded from the sea coast into the interior of the country; northeast from Quilon, to visit the ancient Syrian churches, situated amongst the low hills at the bottom of the high Ghauts, which divide the Carnatic from Malayala. The face of the country in general, in the vicinity of the mountains, exhibits a varied scene of hill and dale, and winding streams. These streams fall from the mountains, and preserve the valleys in perpetual verdure. The woods produce pepper, cardamoms, and cassia, or wild cinnamon; also frankincense and other aromatic gums. What adds much to the grandeur of the scenery in this country is, that the adjacent mountains of Travancore are not barren, but are covered with teak forests, producing the largest timber in the world.

“The first view of the Christian churches, in this sequestered region of Hindostan, connected with the idea of their tranquil duration for so many ages, cannot fail to excite pleasing emotions in the mind of the beholder. The form of the oldest buildings is not unlike that of some of the old parish churches in England; the style of building in both being of Saracenic origin. They have sloping roofs, pointed arch windows, and buttresses supporting the walls. The beams of the roof being exposed to view, are ornamented; and the ceiling of the choir and altar is circular and fretted. In the cathedral churches, the shrines of the deceased bishops are placed on each side of the altar. Most of the churches are built of a reddish stone, squared and polished at the quarry; and are of durable construction, the front wall of the largest edifices being six feet thick. The bells of the churches are cast in the founderies of Travancore. Some of them are of large dimensions; and have inscriptions in Syriac and

Malayalim. In approaching a town in the evening, the sound of the bells may be heard at a distance among the hills; a circumstance which causes the British traveller to forget for a moment that he is in Hindostan, and reminds him of another country. When Dr. Buchanan arrived at the remote churches, he was informed by the inhabitants that no European had, to their knowledge, visited the place before. The Romish priests do not travel thither, there being no church of their communion in that quarter.

"The number of Syrian churches is greater than has been supposed. There are at this time, fifty-five churches in Malayala,* acknowledging the Patriarch of Antioch. The church was erected by the present bishop, in 1793.

"The Syrian Christians are not Nestorians. Formerly, indeed, they had bishops of that communion; but the liturgy of the present church is derived from that of the early church of Antioch, called *Liturgia Jacobi Apostoli*. They are usually denominated *Jacobitæ*; but they differ in ceremonial from the church of that name in Syria, and indeed from any existing church in the world. Their proper designation, and that which is sanctioned by their own use, is *Syrian Christians, or the Syrian church of Malayala*.

"The doctrines of the Syrian church are contained in a very few articles; and are not at variance, in essentials, with the doctrines of the church of England. Their bishops and metropolitan, after conferring with his clergy on the subject, delivered the following opinion: "That an union with the English church, or at least such a connexion as should appear to both churches practicable and expedient, would be a happy event, and favourable to the advancement of religion." It is in contemplation to send to England some of the Syrian youth for education and ordination.

"The present bishop, Mar Dionisius, is a native of Malayala, but of Syrian extraction. He is a man of respectable character in his nation, and exercises himself in the pious discharge of the duties of his high office. He is now 78 years of age, and possesses a venerable aspect, his white beard descending low to his girdle. On public occasions he wears the Episcopal mitre; and is robed in a white vestment, which covers long garments of red silk; and in his hand he holds the pastoral staff. The first native bishop was ordained by the Romish church in 1663: but he was of the Romish communion. Since that period, the old Syrians have continued, till lately, to receive their bishops from Antioch; but that ancient patriarchate being now nearly extinct, and incompetent to the appointment of learned men, the Christian church in Malayala looks henceforth to Britain for the continuance of that light which has shown so long in this dark region of the world.

"From information given by the Syrian Christians, it would appear that the churches of Mesopotamia and Syria (215 in number) with which they are connected, are struggling with great difficulties,

* Malayala comprehends the mountains, and the whole region within them, from Cape Comorin to Cape Eli, whereas, the province of Malabar, commonly so called, contains only the Northern Districts; not including the country of Travancore.

and merely owe their existence to some deference for their antiquity; and that they might be expected soon to flourish again, if favoured with a little support. It would be worthy the church of England to aid the church of Antioch in her low estate. The church of England *is now* what the church of Antioch *once was*. The mode in which aid can be best afforded to Christians under a foreign power in the East, is not chiefly by contributions of money, but by representing to those governments, with which we may have friendly intercourse, that these Christians are of the same religion with ourselves: and that we are desirous that they should be respected. The argument, from the sameness of religion, is well understood by all Asiatic princes, and can never fail when seriously proposed; for they think it both natural and obligatory that every government should be interested in those who are of its own religion. There are two circumstances which invite us to turn our eyes to the country of "the first generations of men." The tolerant spirit of the Wahabian Mahomedans, is a fair prognostic; and promises to aid our endeavours to restore to an ancient community of Christians the blessings of knowledge and religious liberty. Another favourable circumstance is, that some of the churches in Mesopotamia, in one of which the Patriarch of Antioch now resides, are said still to remain in their pristine state, and to have preserved their archives and ancient manuscript libraries. A domestick priest of the Patriarch, now in Cochin, vouches for the truth of this fact. We know from authentic history, that the churches between the rivers escaped the general desolation of the Mahomedan conquest, in the seventh century, by joining arms with the Mahomedans against the Greek Christians, who had been their oppressors. The revival of religion and letters in that once highly-favoured land, in the heart of the ancient world, would be, in the present circumstances of mankind, an auspicious event.

"The Syrian Christians in Malayala still use the Syriac language in their churches; but the Malayalim, or proper Malabar, (a dialect distinct from the Tamul), is the vernacular tongue. They have made some attempts to translate the Syriac scriptures into Malayalim; but have not hitherto had the suitable means of effecting it. When a proposal was made of sending a Malayalim translation to each of their 55 churches, as a standard book, on condition that they would transcribe it, and circulate the copies among the people,—the elder replied, That so great was the desire of the people in general, to have the Bible in the vulgar tongue, that it might be expected that every man *who could write*, would make a copy on *ollas*, (palm leaves), for his own family.

"It ought to be mentioned, to the praise of the present bishop of the Romish church on the coast of Malabar, that he has consented to the circulation of the Scriptures throughout his diocese. The Malayalim translation acquires from this circumstance, an increased importance, since there will be now upwards of 200,000 Christians in Malayala who are ready to receive it. The translation of the New Testament, (which it is proposed to print first), has already commenced, under the superintendence of the Syrian bishop. The true cause of the low state of religion amongst the Romish churches on the sea-coast and in Ceylon, is *their want of the Bible*. It is doubtful

whether some of the Priests know that such a book exists! It is injurious to Christianity in India, to call men *Christians* who know not the scriptures of their religion: they might as well be called by any other name. Oral instruction they have none, even from their European priests. The best effects may therefore be expected from the simple means of putting the Bible into their hands. All who are well acquainted with the natives, know that instruction *by books* is best suited to them. They are in general a contemplative people, and patient in their inquiries; curious also to know what it can be that is of importance enough to be *written*,—at the same time that they regard written precept with respect. If they possess a book in a language which they understand, it will not be left long unread. In Tanjore, and other places where the Bible is freely given, the Protestant religion flourishes; and produces the happiest effects on the character of the people. In Tanjore, the Christian virtues will be found in exercise by the feeble minded Hindoo, in a vigour and purity which will surprise those who have never known the native character but under the greatest disadvantages. On the Sunday, the people, habited in their best apparel, repair to the parish church, where the solemnity of their devotion in accompanying the public prayers, is truly impressive. They sing the old Psalm tunes well: and the voice of the full congregation may be heard at a distance. Prayers being ended, they listen to the sermon evidently with deep attention; nor have they any difficulty in understanding it, for they almost all, both men and women, can read their bible. Many of them take down the discourse on *ollas*, that they may read it afterwards to their families at home.* As soon as the minister has pronounced the text, the sound of the *iron style* on the palm leaf is heard throughout the congregation. Even the boys of the schools have their *ollas* in their hands; and may be seen after divine service reading them to their mothers, as they pass over the fields homewards. This aptitude of the people to receive and to record the words of the preacher, renders it peculiarly necessary that “the priests’ lips should keep knowledge.” Upon the whole, the moral conduct, upright dealing, decorous manners, and decent dress of the native Protestants of Tanjore, demonstrate the powerful influence and peculiar excellence of the Christian religion. It ought, however, to be observed, that the Bible, when the reading of it becomes general, has nearly the same effect on the poor of every place.

“When the Syrian Christians understood that the proposed Malayalan translation was to accord with the English Bible, they desired to know on what *authorities* our translation had been made; alleging, that they themselves possessed a version of undoubted antiquity, namely, that used by the first Christians at Antioch; and that they could not depart from the reading of *that* version. This observation led to the investigation of the ancient Syrio-Chaldaic manuscripts in Malayala; and the inquiry has been successful beyond any expectation that could have been formed.

* It is well known that natives of Tanjore and Travancore can write down what is spoken deliberately, without losing one word. They seldom look at their *ollas* while writing, and can write in the dark with fluency.

"It had been commonly supposed, that all the Syriac manuscripts had been burned by the Romish church at the Synod of Udiampur, near Cochín, in 1599, but it now appears that the most valuable manuscripts were not destroyed: the inquisitors condemned many books to the flames; but they saved the Bible. They were content with ordering that the Syriac scriptures should be amended agreeably to the reading of the Vulgate of Rome; and these emendations now appear in black ink, and of modern appearance, though made in 1599: but many Bibles, and many other books were not produced at all; and the churches in the mountains remained but a short time subject to Romish dominion, (if indeed they can be said to have been at any time subject to it); for the native Governments have ever formed a barrier between the inquisition of Goa and the Christians in the mountains.

"In the acts of the Council of Nice, it is recorded that Joannes, Bishop of India, signed his name at that Council, A. D. 325. This date corresponds with the Syrian year 636; for the primitive Syrian church does not compute time from the Christian æra, but from Alexander the Great. The Syriac version of the Scriptures was brought to India, according to the belief of the Syrians, before the year 636; and they allege that their copies have ever been exact transcripts of that version without known error, through every age, down to this day. There is no tradition among them of the churches in the southern mountains having ever been destroyed, or even molested. Some of their present copies are certainly of ancient date. Though written on a strong thick paper, (like that of some MSS. in the British Museum, commonly called *Eastern Paper*), the ink has, in several places, eat through the material in the exact form of the letter. In other copies, where the ink had less of a corroding quality, it has fallen off, and left a dark vestige of the letter, faint indeed, but not, in general, illegible. There is one volume found in a remote church of the mountains, which merits particular description:—it contains the Old and New Testaments, engrossed on strong vellum, in large folio, having three columns in the page; and is written with beautiful accuracy. The character is Estrangelo Syriac; and the words of every book are numbered. This volume is illuminated; but not after the European manner, the initial letters having no ornament. Prefixed to each book there are figures of principal Scripture characters, (not rudely drawn), the colours of which are distinguishable; and, in some places, the enamel of the gilding is preserved; but the volume has suffered injury from time or neglect, some of the leaves being almost entirely decayed. In certain places the ink has been totally obliterated from the page, and has left the parchment in its natural whiteness; but the letters can, in general, be distinctly traced from the impress of the pen, or from the partial corrosion of the ink. The Syrian church assigns to this manuscript a high antiquity; and alleges that it has been for some centuries in the possession of their Bishops; and that it was industriously concealed from the Romish inquisition in 1599; but its true age can only be ascertained by a comparison with old manuscripts in Europe of a similar kind. On the margin of the drawings are some old Roman and Greek letters, the form of which may lead to a conjecture respecting the

age in which they were written. This copy of the Scriptures has admitted as canonical the Epistle of Clement, in which respect it resembles the Alexandrine manuscript; but it has omitted the Revelations,—that book having been accounted apocryphal by some churches during a certain period in the early ages. The order of the books of the Old and New Testament differs from that of the European copies,—this copy adhering less to unity of subject in the arrangement than to chronological order. The very first emendation of the Hebrew text proposed by Dr. Kennicott, (Gen. iv. 8.) is to be found in this manuscript. The disputed passage in 1 John v. 7. is not to be found in it: that verse is interpolated in some other copies in black ink, by the Romish church, in 1599.

“ Thus it appears that during the dark ages of Europe, while ignorance and superstition in a manner denied the Scriptures to the rest of the world, the Bible found an asylum in the mountains of Malayala; where it was revered and freely read by upwards of 100 churches; and that it has been handed down to the present time under circumstances so highly favourable to accurate preservation, as may justly entitle it to respect, in the collation of doubtful readings of the sacred text.

“ There are many old Syriac manuscripts besides the Bible, which have been well preserved: for the Synod of Udiampier destroyed no volumes but those which treated of religious doctrines or church supremacy. Two different characters of writing appear ever to have been in use among the Syrian Christians,—the common Syriac and the Estrangelo. The oldest manuscripts are in the Estrangelo.

“ But there are other ancient documents in Malayala, not less interesting than the Syrian manuscripts. The old Portuguese historians relate, that soon after the arrival of their countrymen in India, about 300 years ago, the Syrian archbishop of Angamalee, by name Mar Jacob, deposited in the fort of Cochin for safe custody, certain tablets of brass, on which were engraved Rights of Nobility and other privileges, granted to the Christians by a Prince of a former age; and that while these tablets were under the charge of the Portuguese, they had been unaccountably lost, and had never after been heard of. The loss of the tablets was deeply regretted by the Christians; and the Portuguese writer, Gouvea, ascribes their subsequent oppressions by the native powers, to the circumstance of their being no longer able to produce their charter. It is not generally known that, at a former period, the Christians possessed regal power in Malayala. The name of their last king was Beliarte. He died without issue; and his kingdom descended, by the custom of the country, to the king of Cochin. When Vasco de Gama was at Cochin, in 1503, he saw the sceptre of the Christian king.

“ It is further recorded by the same historians, that besides the documents deposited with the Portuguese, the Christians possessed three other tablets, containing ancient grants, which they kept in their own custody: and that these were exhibited to the Romish Archbishop, Menezes, at the church of Tevelecar, near the mountains, in 1599,—the inhabitants having first exacted an oath from the Archbishop, that he would not remove them. Since that period little has been heard of the tablets. Though they are often referred to in

the Syrian writings, the translation itself has been lost. It has been said that they were seen about 40 years ago; but Adrian Moens, a Governor of Cochin, in 1770, who published some account of the Jews of Malabar, informs us, that he used every means in his power, for many years, to obtain a sight of the Christian Plates; and was at length satisfied they were irrecoverably lost; or rather, he adds, that they never existed.

“ The learned world will be gratified, to know, that all these ancient tablets, not only the three last mentioned exhibited in 1599, but those also, (as is supposed,) delivered by the Syrian Archbishop to the Portuguese, on their arrival in India, which are the most ancient, have been recently recovered by the exertions of Lieut. Col. Macaulay, the British Resident in Travancore; and are now officially deposited with that officer.

“ The plates are six in number. They are composed of a mixed metal. The engraved page on the largest plate is 13 inches long, by about 4 broad. They are closely written; four of them on both sides of the plate, making in all eleven pages. On the plate reputed to be the oldest, there is writing perspicuously engraved in nail-headed or triangular-headed letters, resembling the Persepolitan or Babylonish. On the same plate there is writing in another character, which has no affinity with any existing character in Hindostan. The grant on this plate appears to be witnessed by four Jews of rank, whose names are distinctly written in an old Hebrew character, resembling the alphabet called *The Palmyrene*; and to each name is prefixed the title of *Magen*; that is, Chief.

“ It may be doubted whether there exists in the world another document of equal antiquity, which is, at the same time, of so great a length, and in such faultless preservation as the *Christian Tablets* in Malayala. The Jews of Cochin, indeed, contest the palm of antiquity and of preservation; for they also produce tablets, containing privileges granted at a remote period. The Jewish Tablets are two in number. The Jews were long in possession of a third plate, which now appears to be the property of the Christians. The Jews commonly show an ancient Hebrew translation of their plates. Dr. Leyden made another translation; which differs from the Hebrew: and there has lately been found among the old Dutch records at Cochin, a third translation, which approaches nearer to Dr. Leyden's than to the Hebrew. In a Hebrew manuscript, which will shortly be published, it is recorded that a grant on brass tablets was given to the Jews, in A. D. 379.

“ As it is apprehended that there may be some difficulty in obtaining an accurate translation of all these tablets, it is proposed to print a copperplate *fac simile* of the whole, and to transmit copies to the learned societies in Hindostan and in Europe; for this purpose an engraver is now employed on the plates, at Cochin. The Christian and Jewish plates together, will make 14 pages. A copy has been sent, in the first instance, to the Pundits of the Shanscrit College, at Trichur, by direction of the Rajah of Cochin.

“ When the White Jews at Cochin were questioned respecting the ancient copies of their Scriptures, they answered, That it had been usual to *bury* the old copy read in the synagogue, when decayed

by time and use. This, however, does not appear to have been the practice of the Black Jews, who were the first settlers; for in the record-chests of their synagogues, old copies of the law have been discovered; some of which are complete, and for the most part, legible. Neither could the Jews of Cochin produce any historical manuscripts of consequence, their vicinity to the sea-coast having exposed their community to frequent revolution; but many old writings have been found at the remote synagogues of their ancient enemies, the black Jews, situated at Tritooa, Paroor, Chenotta, and Maleh; the last of which place is near the mountains. Amongst these writings are some of great length, in Rabbinical Hebrew; but in so ancient and uncommon a character, that it will require much time and labour to ascertain their contents. There is one manuscript written in a character resembling the Palmyrene Hebrew, on the brass plates: but it is in a decayed state; and the leaves adhere so closely to each other, that it is doubtful whether it will be possible to unfold them, and preserve the reading.—It is sufficiently established by the concurring evidence of written record and Jewish tradition, that the black Jews had colonized on the coast of India, long before the Christian æra. There was another colony at Rajahpooor, in the Mahratta territory, which is not yet extinct; and there are at this time, Jewish soldiers and Jewish native officers in the British service. That these are a remnant of the Jews of the first dispersion at the Babylonish captivity, seems highly probable. There are many other tribes settled in Persia, Arabia, Northern India, Tartary, and China, whose respective places of residence may be easily discovered. The places which have been already ascertained, are 65 in number. These tribes have in general, (particularly those who have passed the Indus,) assimilated much to the customs of the countries in which they live; and may sometimes be seen by a traveller, without being recognised as Jews. The very imperfect resemblance of their countenance to the Jews of Europe, indicates that they have been detached from the parent stock in Judea, many ages before the race of Jews in the west. A fact corroborative of this is, that certain of these tribes do not call themselves *Jews*, but *Beni-Israel*, or *Israelites*; for the name *Jew* is derived from Judah; whereas the ancestors of these tribes were not subject to the kings of Judah, but to the kings of Israel. They have, in most places, the book of the Law, the book of Job, and the Psalms; but know little of the prophets. Some of them have even lost the book of the law; and only know that they are Israelites from tradition, and from their observance of peculiar rites.

“ A copy of the Scriptures, belonging to the Jews of the east, who might be supposed to have no communication with the Jews in the west, has been long a *desideratum* with Hebrew scholars. In the coffer of a synagogue of the black Jews, in the interior of Malayala, there has been found an old copy of the law, written on a *roll of leather*. The skins are sewed together, and the roll is about fifty feet in length. It is in some places worn out, and the holes have been patched with pieces of parchment.

“ Some of the Jews suppose that this roll came originally from Senna, in Arabia; others have heard that it was brought from Cashmir. The Cabul Jews, who travel annually into the interior of China,

say, that in some synagogues, the law is still found written on a roll of leather; not on vellum, but on a soft flexible leather, made of goat skins, and dyed red; which agrees with the description of the roll abovementioned.

“ Such of the Syriac and Jewish manuscripts as may, on examination, be found to be valuable, will be deposited in the public libraries of the British Universities.

“ The princes of the Deccan have manifested a liberal regard for the extension of Shanscrit learning, by furnishing lists of the books in their temples for the college of Fort William, in Bengal. His excellency, the Rajah of Tanjore, was pleased to set the example, by giving the voluminous catalogue of the ancient library of the kings of Tanjore; and his example has been followed by the Ranny of Ramnad, patroness of the celebrated temple of the Ramisseram, near Adam's Bridge; by his Highness, the Rajah of Travancore, who has given lists of all the books in the Travancore country; and by the Rajah of Cochin, patron of the ancient Shanscrit college, at the temple of Trichiur. It is understood that a copy of any book in these catalogues will be given when required. The Bramins of Travancore consider that their manuscripts are likely to have as just a claim to high antiquity, or at least to accurate preservation, as those in the temples in the north: and for the same reason that the Christian and Jewish records have been so well preserved; which is, that the country of Travancore, defended by mountains, has never, according to tradition, been subjugated by invaders from the north of Hindostan.

“ The design of investigating the history and literature of the Christians and Jews in the East, was submitted to the Marquis Wellesley, before he left India. His Lordship, judging it to be of importance that the actual relation of the Syrian Christians to our own church should be ascertained, and auguring something interesting to the republic of letters, from the investigation of the Syriac and Jewish antiquities, was pleased to give orders that public aid should be afforded to Dr. Buchanan, in the prosecution of his inquiries, wherever it might be practicable. To the operation of these orders it is owing that the proposed researches, of which some slight notices are given above, have not been made in vain.

“ *Cochin, January, 1807.*”